



WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

FACT SHEET

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Information about the Family Radio Service

What is Family Radio Service?

The Family Radio Service ("FRS") is one of the Citizens Band Radio Services. It is for your family, friends and associates to communicate among yourselves within your neighborhood and while on group outings. You cannot make a telephone call with a FRS unit. Expect a communication range of less than one mile.

Do I need an FCC license for my FRS unit?

License documents are neither needed or issued. FRS Rule 1 provides your authority to operate a FRS unit in places where the FCC regulates radiocommunications, as long as you use only an unmodified FCC certified FRS unit. An FCC certified FRS unit has an identifying label placed on it by the manufacturer. There is no age or citizenship requirement.

Where may I operate my FRS unit?

You may operate your FRS unit within the territorial limits of the fifty United States, the District of Columbia, and the Caribbean and Pacific Insular areas ("U.S."). You may also operate your FRS unit on or over any other area of the world, except within the territorial limits of areas where radio- communications are regulated by another agency of the U.S. or within the territorial limits of any foreign government.

Which FRS channels may I use?

You may use any of the 14 CB channels on a "take turns" basis. No FRS channel is assigned to any specific individual or organization.

Are there other private Personal Radio Services for short distance two-way voice communications?

Yes. There is the Citizens Band ("CB") Radio Service and the General Mobile Radio Service ("GMRS"). You are authorized by CB Rule 3 to operate an unmodified FCC type-accepted CB unit in accordance with the rules. No license document is issued. Expect a communications range of one to five miles. See Part 95, Subpart D of the Commission's Rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 95.401-95.428. For operation in the GMRS, however, you will need a license. GMRS systems are used to facilitate the activities of the licensees and their family members. Expect a communications range of five to twenty-five miles. See Part 95, Subpart A of the Commission's Rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 95.1-95.181.

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Where can I get a copy of the FCC Rules for the FRS?

The rules are published annually in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 47, Telecommunications, Part 80 to End. Order from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328. They are written in plain language to make them easy to read and understand. There are the four operating rules, summarized below. See 47 C.F.R §§ 95.191-95.194. For technical information, see §§ 95.601-95.669.

FRS Rule 1 - Eligibility and responsibility.

(a) Unless you are a representative of a foreign government, you are authorized by this rule to operate an FCC certified FRS unit in accordance with the rules in this subpart. No license will be issued.

(b) You are responsible for all communications that you make with the FRS unit. You must share each channel with other users. No channel is available for the private or exclusive use of any entity.

FRS Rule 2 - Authorized locations.

(a) Provided that you comply with these rules, you are authorized to operate an FRS unit:

(1) Within or over any area of the world where radio services are regulated by the FCC; (this area includes the fifty United States and the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands (50 islets and cays), American Samoa (seven islands), the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam Island) or

(2) Within or over any other area of the world, except within or over the territorial limits of areas where radio services are regulated by an agency of the United States other than the FCC or any foreign government (you are subject to its rules); or

(3) Aboard any vessel or aircraft registered in the United States, with the permission of the captain, that is within or over any area of the world where radio services are regulated by the FCC or upon or over international waters; or

(4) Aboard any unregistered vessel or aircraft owned or operated by a United States citizen or company that is within or over any area of the world where radio services are regulated by the FCC or upon or over international waters.

(5) You must operate the FRS unit only according to any applicable treaty to which the United States is a party. The FCC will make public notice of any such conditions.

(b) Your use of an FRS unit must not cause harmful interference to a FCC monitoring facility. Doing so could result in imposition of restrictions upon the operation of the FRS unit within 0.8 km (0.5 mile) of the facility by its Engineer-in-Charge. (Geographical coordinates of the facilities that require protection are listed in § 0.121(c) of this chapter.)

(c) The FCC may impose additional restrictions on a FRS station if the station is located at a point within the National Radio Quiet Zone (an area within the States of Maryland,

Virginia and West Virginia). The Zone is the area bounded by:

- (1) 39° 15' N. on the North;
- (2) 78° 30' W. on the East;
- (3) 37° 30' N. on the South; and
- (4) 80° 30' W. on the West.

FRS Rule 3 - Types of communications.

(a) You may use an FRS unit to conduct two-way voice communications with another person. You may use the FRS unit to transmit one-way communications only to establish communications with another person, send an emergency message, provide traveler assistance, make a voice page, or to conduct a brief test.

(b) The FRS unit may transmit tones to make contact or to continue communications with a particular FRS unit. If the tone is audible (more than 300 Hertz), it must last no longer than 15 seconds at one time. If the tone is subaudible (300 Hertz or less), it may be transmitted continuously only while you are talking.

(c) You must not use an FRS unit in connection with any activity which is against federal, state or local law.

(d) You must, at all times and on all channels, give priority to emergency communication messages concerning the immediate safety of life or the immediate protection of property.

(e) No FRS unit may be interconnected to the public switched network.

FRS Rule 4 - FRS units.

(a) You may only use an FCC certified FRS unit. (You can identify an FCC certified FRS unit by the label placed on it by the manufacturer.)

(b) You must not make, or have made, any internal modification to an FRS unit. Any internal modification cancels the FCC certification and voids your authority to operate the unit in the FRS.

(c) You may not attach any antenna, power amplifier, or other apparatus to an FRS unit that has not been FCC certified as part of that FRS unit. There are no exceptions to this rule and attaching any such apparatus to a FRS unit cancels the FCC certification and voids everyone's authority to operate the unit in the FRS.

Above are general answers to the questions most frequently asked about the FRS. For complete information, see the Commission's Rules for the Family Radio Service, 47 C.F.R. §§ 95.191-95.194.